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Summary of African Probiotic Yoghurt Network (APYN)

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African Probiotic Yoghurt Network

P.O. Box 11348, Plot No. 167, “Kivulini Kitchen Building”, Isamilo, Mwanza, Tanzania
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Summary of African Probiotic Yoghurt Network (APYN)

Name of Organization: African Probiotic Yoghurt Network (APYN)

Mandate: The African Probiotic Yoghurt Network (APYN) supports the establishment, development, and continuation of small-scale probiotic yoghurt community health micro-enterprises that economically empower at risk and/or impoverished women and youth while at the same time improving community health and nutrition, especially for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Although APYN is a relatively new Organization (developed in 2011), APYN was established through Western Heads East (WHE), Kivulini/ Mikono Yetu, and National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) who have a long history of implementing community health and development projects in East Africa. Since 2004, Kivulini and WHE have been working together to develop an extended probiotic yoghurt community health network which is now registered as its own NGO, APYN.

APYN Objectives:

1. To strengthen training and capacity of small groups (mainly women and youth) by providing the training and technology to economically empower women's and youth through the production, sale and distribution of probiotic yoghurt.
2. To improve community health for all, especially people living with HIV/AIDS, by supporting the production, distribution and sale of probiotic yoghurt.
3. To create public awareness on the health benefits of probiotic yoghurt, and its relationship to poverty reduction and development.
4. To link and partner groups, networks, and individuals to share experiences on trade, success and related issues.

What are Probiotics? According to the FAO/WHO probiotics are "Live microorganisms which when administered in adequate amounts confer a health benefit on the host".

How can probiotics be used to both prevent and treat disease?

Probiotics have been proven to:

- Reduce gastrointestinal disorders
- Increase immune response
- Reduce diarrhoeal episodes
- Prevent urinary tract infections

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- Reduce bacterial vaginosis, a condition which predisposes women to HIV/AIDS and other STIs
- Slow the process of morbidity (sickness) and mortality (death) of people living with HIV/AIDS
- *Probiotics are especially beneficial for people living with HIV/AIDS who often experience disease symptoms such as low immune response, diarrhea and gastrointestinal difficulties
- Probiotic bacteria are different from regular bacteria found in yogurt since they can survive in the gastrointestinal tract and as they pass through the intestine they work to compete with bacteria that cause health issues such as diarrhea, while at the same time boosting immune response

Probiotic Yogurt: Although probiotics may be administered in various forms such as capsules, powders, enriched yogurts, yogurt-like products, and milks, yogurt was chosen as the delivery medium for the probiotic bacterium for the WHE project as there has been a long history of fermented foods in Africa. Yogurt is also quite easily digestible and nutritionally dense as it is a good source of protein, fat, carbohydrates, calcium, magnesium, riboflavin, thiamine, as well as vitamins A, B-6, B-12, C, D and E. Probiotic bacteria are added to the yogurt in order to create an edible and digestible delivery medium

Capacities: APYN engages staff, board members, advisors and volunteers at different levels from the local, national and international level depending on the issue at hand. At the local level staff and volunteers participate in implementing and overseeing relevant project activities such as training sessions, network sharing meetings, community meetings and dialogues, distribution of probiotic yoghurt to registered recipients, probiotic delivery and quality control checks etc. At the National and International levels staff, board members and volunteers participate in relevant activities promoting gender equality, women's rights, children's rights, reproductive health, developmental issues as well as advocating for policies that will keep women and children safe.

APYN has a well-established financial management system whereby all financial transactions and happenings are recorded and monitored by the Project Leader. In addition, quarterly, half year and annual financial reports and semiannual and annual audits are reviewed by all APYN Staff, partner organizations such as Kivulini and Western Heads East, external auditing teams as well as the Board of Directors for accountability purposes.

APYN has an established head office facility located in Mwanza, Tanzania that is open to the public as well as to Network members. Each of the existing Network Probiotic Yoghurt Kitchens (9 currently established and 11 planned and upcoming kitchens) include production facility sites in addition to a specified list of kitchen equipment and quality control items (e.g shelves, pots, gas cookers, cleaning supplies etc.).

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Main Projects:

Probiotic Yoghurt Kitchen Implementation, Monitoring and Expansion

APYN supports the establishment of probiotic yoghurt community health projects (kitchens) by seeking funding, assisting groups with equipment and inventory establishment and by providing the training needed to implement such projects. In addition, APYN assists probiotic yoghurt network members (groups) in monitoring their progress, quality control as well as project activities to achieve certain quality standards in implementation. The goal of APYN is to expand the number of successfully functioning sustainable community development projects (probiotic yoghurt community health projects) throughout Africa. So far there are 5 fully functioning APYN community projects (kitchens) in Mwanza, 2 in Kenya and there is a plan and allotted funding to develop at least 13 more within Africa. In addition, APYN will continue to seek funding for further expansion.

Probiotic Yoghurt Programme Networking and Information Sharing

APYN is a network that supports partnerships, collaborations and sharing between APYN network members and other like-minded organizations and institutions. APYN seeks to facilitate, nurture and share information, successes, challenges and ways forward for and between APYN member groups in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency in probiotic yoghurt community health promotion and women's and youth economic empowerment. In this, APYN shares information with APYN members, conducts training sessions, facilitates and hosts meetings, discussions, forums and conferences with its members and other like-minded organizations and institutions. APYN also seeks to establish high levels of standardization and quality control to ensure the success of its members.

Women and Youth Economic Empowerment

APYN seeks to improve the economic status of network members (women and youth) by promoting a sustainable business opportunity through this probiotic yoghurt community health project. APYN trains, monitors and works with all network groups to ensure that a sustainable means of income generation is created and maintained. Thus, network groups produce, distribute and sell the probiotic yoghurt in order to obtain sustainable incomes. In this, network groups are assisted by APYN with project finances, marketing, bookkeeping and other business related endeavours.

Community Health Promotion

APYN seeks to improve community health through the promotion of the sale and distribution of probiotic yoghurt to the community. In this, APYN seeks to improve the nutritional status and quality of life of community members as the probiotic yoghurt has proven beneficial health and nutritional properties. In addition to the promotion of probiotic yoghurt consumption, APYN seeks to address other community health issues

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such as domestic violence and women’s rights issues that impact community health. APYN conducts community events, training sessions, and community health campaigns in order to accomplish the aforementioned community health objectives.

HIV/AIDS and Stigma Prevention

APYN works directly with HIV/AIDS beneficiaries to provide them with free of charge probiotic yoghurt. So far APYN has secured the funding to support 55 people per yoghurt kitchen for 20 projects living with HIV/AIDS in receiving probiotic yoghurt on a daily basis (a total of 1100 people). Probiotic yoghurt has been proven to be particularly beneficial to people living with HIV/AIDS as it increases immune function, prevents related illnesses such as diarrhea, urinary tract infections, gastrointestinal disorders and other immune related illnesses. Probiotic yoghurt has also been known to reduce the side effects of antiretroviral medicines as it provides a nutritional and micronutrient base for absorption.

In addition to providing free-of-charge probiotic yoghurt for people living with HIV/AIDS, APYN seeks to educate the community on HIV/AIDS prevention as well as stigma prevention against people living with HIV/AIDS.